Mrs. C. V. Beardsley -

The Darktown Literary Society Meets.

—BY—

EDWARD B. WARREN

PRICE 25 CENTS

Eldridge Entertainment House

Franklin, Ohio and Denver, Colo.
944 So. Logan Street

YOU WILL BE GLAD TO KNOW OF THESE NEW PLAYS

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By Mary Shaw Page. A bright 1-act play with simple stage setting. William, husband of Mary, essays to train Mary, especially along the lines of correcting carelessness. As is always the case, William gets in deep water, but finally wades out. 2 males, 4 females, and plays about 45 minutes. Price, 25c.

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By Ethelyn Sexton. A rollicking 1-act girls' play for 6 characters. Barbara's mother has a friend, Ann Burnett, who is to visit the girls at college, with the intention of giving a generous sum to the school. The girls, wishing o gain her good will, practice their "manners." Miss Burnett, however, appears in disguise and has much fun at their expense. All ends well and the school gets the money. Plays about 45 minutes. Easy setting and costumes. Price, 25c.

Eldridge Entertainment House

FRANKLIN, OHIO also DENVER, COLO.
944 S. Logan St.

52746

MEETING OF THE DARKTOWN LITERARY SOCIETY

A Black-face "Debate" with Plenty of Action

By EDWARD B. WARREN

Price 25 Cents

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ELDRIDGE ENTERTAINMENT HOUSE,
Franklin, Ohio also Denver, Colo.

Cast of Characters

A President

A Secretary

A First Monitor

A Critic

A Treasurer

Rastus Whitman, The Modern John C. Calhoun

Lew Harm, A Debater

Jasamine Johns Joharis, A Declaimer

Two Judges

A Third Judge, Large, Burly Negro. (This character sits on back row.)

Two Policemen

As many others to fill up seats as desired.

(All characters are Black-face.)

Have arrangement of any Literary Society. President's desk in center; desk for critic and treasurer at right of president; desk for monitor and secretary at left of president. At a short distance in front of officers and directly in front of the platform which should be directly in front of the president's desk, have several rows of ordinary chairs or benches. All characters seated when the curtain rises.

All characters dressed grotesquely.

Meeting of the Darktown Literary Society

CURTAIN RISES

(*Everybody seated. President strikes his gavel.*)

PRESIDENT—Now will de meetin' please come ter ordah an' we'll hab de report ob de' minutes ob de last meetin' from de Secretary.

SECRETARY—Yer honah. Compounded Fraternity Hall, December 4, 1920. Der was a crap game befoah de meetin' was called ter ordah by yer honah. Consequently de s'ciety neber started tell thirty minutes late. When de hour cum ter start de meetin', de presiden been two dollars in de hole, so he wouldn't call de s'ciety ter ordah tell he had done win back his two dollars.

Befoah de reglar program tuk place, Ebenezer Hardman move dat we turns to bery important business. His motion was dat de s'ciety abolish crap games tell aftah de meetin's, cause he had jest got control ob de bones when de president call de meetin' ter ordah. Dat motion was seconded by Rastus Wildflower who had lost de only fifty cents dat he had ter buy supper wid. Dere was an eben split on de votes, and the president killed de motion, 'cause he sed he was purfectly satisfied wid habin' crap games befoah de meetin's.

Rastus had ter be thrown out ob de hall, 'cause he wanted ter fight wid de president.

Aftah dis minor spectacle, de reglar program was carried out.

Dere was a good debate betwixt four ob our illustrated scribes. De questionaire was, "It hab been already resolved dat it am more easy ter ketch chickens dan ter buy 'em."

De negative won on de bery strong pint dat it jest cum natchel to eny nigger to ketch chickens, but it ain't natchel fer de nigger ter wuk fer de money ter buy de chicken wid.

Aftah a few fist fights and one wrastlin' match, de meetin' bruk up tell next time. (*Secretary sits.*)

PRES.—Is dere eny kerections ter dese moments? (*Silence.*) No? Den dey will stay jest as dey is. (*He waits.*) Gentlemen, we has de bery pribileged honah ter hab wid us dis ebenin', de Hon'rable Rastus Whitman, who am going ter tell us ob de real conditions ob de world. As one ob de debaters am missing, we'll hear de gentleman speal whilst we waits fer dat lazy scoundrel ter show up. (*Turns to Secretary.*) Mr Secretary, you impose a heaby fine on dat nigger, 'cause he had a business ter be heah. (*Faces front.*) So we will now hab de pleasure ob hearing de Hon'rable Rastus Whitman, oderwise known as de Modern John C. Calhoun, on de question ob States Rights. (*Bows to Whitman.*)

WHITMAN—(*He is an elderly Negro, somewhat slow in his movements, perhaps with one hand on his hip while walking. He slowly walks to the position on the platform in front of the President. Has on full dress coat; pants, khaki, bagging; bosom, stiff, white; cuffs. Red undershirt. Rope holding up pants. Neat appearance when he starts. Although he is old, he is a fiery character, when he gets "roused up," and displays that gesture which characterizes his race.*) Ladies and women, gentlemen and men, sons and aunts, uncles and daughters, and ebery emaciated victim ob dis huh ignoble circumstances, I, as de representatib ob de Almagated Ordah ob Expiring Ethiopians, do prevail befoah your faces de sentiments ob dat disgust council. I tells you niggers dat de time (*gesture*) am done come when we pompious sons ob an abstruse race ob sagacious men, has got ter put our shoulder ter de wheel and expectorate dis huh profound problem. (*Waits.*) As a matter fer yuh precarious minds, I should first circumspect my words and tell yuh how dis huh ting furst commenced, but I

conceibes dat yuh intellects ain't matured enuff yet ter withstand de onslaughts ob a supercilious gentleman. (*Waits.*) So, I's goin' ter excommunicate fer yuh vicissitudes de principles ob our explorable condition in jest as simple a language as I knows how. (*Waits.*) Ef any one ob yuh finds abstruseness in ma oblong deliberation, why, jest mention it, and I'll secede ter elucidate in a more dilated manner. (*Waits. Pulls out handkerchief and wipes face.*) I tell yuh young niggers dat de bery cause ob dis huh unseasonable action on de behalf of de white people is a matter ob monumental meditation. (*Swings fist in air. Waits.*) Dey has jest simply got us disposing as ter dere curriculum of intimidation. An' I wants ter tell yuh dat de only hope ob moderation ob dese debilish exactions is dat (*stamps foot on floor*) we coagugate ourselves inter a dismembered union! (*Waits.*) Ef we formulates a leader and a impedimental plan ob resurrection, we kin rise up against dem and capitulate der leaders. Den dey will be submerged into sech a dilapidated state of subjectification dat dey can't expose on us eny more ob dere hegoatsism. (*Waits.*) De scientifical experimentations ob all de past bygone ages has vindificated dat de Son ob Ham, or de Ethiopian, or ter use more uncongrous speech, de nigger, sech as you an' me is, has always been (*loud*) a indispensoryable atom ob de univorse. (*Waits.*) Dat's why de white man gallivanted ter de goldian shores ob old Africa and subjectificated our forefathers. Dey brot dem ter de illuminated shores ob dese United States ob America and disposed on dem de most ignonimousness (*slow and distinct*) and most delectableness reactions dat dere congested craniums could perceib ob! (*Waits.*) It was (*Opens coat and exposes red shirt*) de most shame-faced act dat de conscience ob de univorse has eber been exposed ter! (*Waits.*) It was de height ob conglomerated audacity! (*Waits.*) Jest tink! Your great-granddaddy might hab ben one ob dem illistrious shepherds ob one ob dem supercilious tribes ob old sunny Africa. An' jest tink, gentlemen, how (*slow and distinct*) peebed he must felt when dem white folks run him down like a infuriated

skunk and trowed dem ironical chains around his sublime posture! (*Louder.*) An' jest tink how humilified and distasteful he musta looked (*Faster*) when dey put him up on dat rostrum ter sell him in sech a nude countenance! (*Waits. Wipes face with handkerchief.*) Fellow gentlemen, (*low and slow*) de only plan ob retriebement dat I kin concebe ob is dat we draw up a consummation ob our inaugurated distractions and present dem to dese ungrateful plebians. Now dat I hab expostulated in de most simple dubiousness, I will turn de meetin' ober ter yuh illustrated president of yuh protracted ordah fer future introspection. (*Bows. Resumes seat.*)

PRES.—(*Claps hands. Others follow suit. Quiet.*) I tells yuh niggers dat dat am what yuh calls Elecutionary Speeching. We suttinly is glad ter hab de Hon'rable John C. Calhoun wid us, and we wants ter tank him fer dese spurious words. It is wid regret dat I must announce ter yuh gentlemen dat Josephus Tardiman ain't git huh yit. He is de guy on de negatif side ob de debate. Folks, dis debate dis aftahnune am a bery nerbous one. By dat I means dis. Dat it is seclusive or delusive, or, at eny rate dere am goin' ter be some kind ob a lusin', 'cause de winner am goin' ter be elected ter de presidency ob de Almagated Ordah ob Expiring Ethiopians. Now, it does grieb my heart bery much and decisively ter see dat one ob de gentilmen am absent; but as de vacancy needs repletion immediately, I is goin' ter appoint a substitute fer de absent brother. An' I is goin' ter put de Hon'rable John C. Calhoun on de negatif side ob de debate. (*Everybody looks at Whitman.*)

WHITMAN—(*Stands and bows. Broad smile comes over his countenance as he slowly walks up front and takes his seat on the left of the president.*) Ah considers dis a great honah, indeed!

LEW HARM—(*Affirmative. Pulls handkerchief out of his pocket and wipes his face.*) Whew! I done knowed I lost dis debate! (*He gets up and walks to seat on right of President.*)

PRES.—I's goin' ter appoint fer de judges, Mr. Lorry Wilson, Brother Jenkins Simpson, and dat big nigger on de last row. I don't know his name, but he looks like he got enough sense ter 'cide de debate wid his fist ef he can't wid his intellect. Now, we will hab de debate.

WHITMAN—Mr. President, what am de question fer meditation and introspection?

PRES.—(*astonished at these words. Gazes at Whitman with mouth wide open.*) Wot's dat yuh sed?

WHITMAN—Why, what am de query dat me an' de belligerent am goin' ter wrestle wid?

PRES.—Nigger, dere ain't goin' ter be eny more wrastlin' matches in dis hall, yuh hears dat. Not whilst I sets in dis ornamented chair.

WHITMAN—Oh, who in de debil said anything 'bout wrestling matches?

PRES.—Well, den, nigger, make yuhself plain. I's a plain man. I eats plain, I looks plain, I talks plain, and I understands plain.

WHITMAN—I percebes dat your conglomerated audacity might resuscitate dat latent diffident instinct in yuh irascible self. And—

PRES.—Yes, dat's all bery true, but let's hab dis debate.

WHITMAN—How's I goin' ter debate when I doesn't know de query?

PRES.—What you mean, enyway, man?

HARM—He must mean de questionnaire.

PRES.—Oh! de questionnaire! Oh, yes! Yuh wants ter know what yuh goin' ter debate about. Now, I understands yuh. Yuh wants ter be on yuh guard when de time comes. I'll hab de Secretary read de problem fer solution.

SECRETARY—(*Stands. Clears throat.*) It am resolved dat de right time fer de nigger man to awaken ter his place is huh. (*Takes seat.*)

WHITMAN—Dat sound bery suspicious, but dis nigger (*points to Harm*) don't look like he hab much sense nohow. Go ahead.

HARM—Yuh Honah, (*faces president*) Hon'rable Jedges, (*faces front*) and all who am interested in de interpretation ob dis unparalleled question. I considers it a bery great honah ter hab de pribilege ter stand befoah yuh on dis (*takes handkerchief from pocket and wipes face*) sweaty night. (*Waits.*) Howeber, I wants yuh ter understand, befoah I opens my mouth, dat I'll consider it a bigger honah, yuh hon'rable jedges, ef yuh recommends me fer de position as de president ob de Almagated Ordah ob Expiring Ethiopians. In udder words, I considers dat elevated position de highest honah. (*He waits.*) Now, befoah I starts, I wants ter tell yuh right now, dat ef yuh doesn't like my method ob arguing, jest keep yuh mouth shet, and set still. 'Cause all de doars is up your side (*points to opposite side of the hall, over the heads of his audience*) and ef I has ter run out ob dis hall, some ob yuh might git stampeded upon top of me, and yuh'll hab ter be carried ter de hospital. (*Waits. Wipes face.*) As de chosen defender ob dis question, (*Remember gestures. Gestures, and comical gestures all the way through the debate will make the life of the entire affair.*) Resolved: Dat de time am right now fer de nigger ter awaken ter his place is huh, I purposes ter extend my argument from two hitching posts. Dat is ter say, dat I's done make up my mind as ter de outcome ob dis heuh question, and I's hitched right dere and I doesn't want ter be loosened by dis heuh man what you calls hisself de Hon'rable John C. Kelhoun. (*Waits.*) Dem two lines which I's goin' ter argue from is dis. First, dat dis am de time, 'cause dere ain't no better time, past, present or future. And, second, 'cause we's got sech hon'rable men as de Hon'rable John C. Calhoun libing today. (*Turns and points to Whitman, who smiles and bows to his audience.*) I, ob de affirmative, holds to de point dat dis—dis time right now dat you and I is lookin' at—is de best time. Dat dere kin be no better time dan

today. As we looks about us and sees de griebiances ob all de folks around us, it jest simply tells us dat something has gotta be done, and done bery quick. (*Waits.*) I will jest quote de Hon. Kelhoun fer authority. He jest git through saying, "De time am done come when we pompious sons ob an abstruse race ob sagacious men hab gotta put our shoulders ter dat wheel and expectorate wid dis huh profound problem." (*Remember gesture*) Again, (*Whitman turns uneasily in his chair. Opens eyes wide. Scratches head. .Has all appearances of one greatly disturbed.*) de bery cause ob dese hard times is unexcusable. Why, gintlemen, de times is hard —I knows dey is hard, 'cause I ain't had enyting ter eat sence last night mahself—'cause we has ter work. Now dat ain't no natchel ting fer eny nigger ter do. Our noble ancestors, as de Hon'rable Kelhoun jest teld yuh, is come from Africi, and Africi am a land where dey don't need ter work. In de first place, dey don't need eny house ter lib in. Dey kin git under a tree to git out ob de rain. It don't neber git cold down dere. So yuh sees dat a nigger don't need eny house in dat hot climate. (*Waits.*) And he don't need ter work for his food, 'cause (*Remember gestures*) he jest hab ter pick up a big rock and throw up into a tree and knock down de cocoa nuts. And he don't hab ter wear much clothes in dat hot country. So, yuh see, gentlemen, it am de fault ob de white folks dat we is huh and dey has got ter look out fer us. Now, ef any ob you niggers don't belieb what I done tell yuh, jest ask de Hon'rable John C. Kelhoun. (*Whitman very nervous and uneasy.*) He jest (*points to Whitman*) done gib yuh a long, protracted oration ob all what I sed. He'll back me up in dis. He's authority. An' ef yuh doesn't belieb me, ask de president. (*Turns to Pres., who nods head and smiles. Whitman appears very uneasy.*) Now, gentlemen, and women, too. Now, to proob de second point, dat dis am de right time, 'cause we has sech cap'ble men as de efficient John C. Kelhoun. Why, gentlemen, jest look at him. (*Turns to Whitman. Whitman brushes lapels of coat; sits up in chair. Smiles.*

Flattered by this remark of his opponent.) Sech men as him is leaders, 'cause yuh jest heard him gib de reasons fer what I's telling yuh 'bout now. (*Whitman sinks in chair; opens wide his mouth; gazes scrutinizingly at the other.*) (*Waits.*) So, gentlemen, I leaves it wid you, dat fer dese bery reasons de time am right. (*Bows and sits.*)

PRES.—I neber knowed dat nigger had all dat sense nohow. Now, we will hab de opposite ob de question.

WHITMAN—(*Gets up with handkerchief in hand. Grunts.*) Mr. President, excruciable judges, and whoeber is out dere. (*Points to his audience.*) I synchroniously (*talks slow*) wid ma detestable and bombastic belligerent ober dere (*points to opponent*) does surely 'gree wid him in ebery ting dat he done sed. (*Waits.*) I's gotta 'gree wid him, (*slow*) 'cause I intends to connive 'gainst him and expound de contraiwise ob ma oration.

AFFIRMATIVE—(*pad in hand; interrupts speaker*) Mr. President. (*Faces Pres., who knocks gavel.*) Yuh honah, de affirmative speaker desires ter interrupt. (*Whitman turns slowly and looks at opponent.*) Yuh honah, is dere to be a back-biting in dis argument?

WHITMAN—Backbitin'! (*Shakes his shoulders and smoothes down coat in back.*) Nigger, what you mean by dat?

PRES.—I reckin he mean back-buttal.

WHITMAN—Aha! No! He mean *re*-buttal. Yes, nigger, dere am a-goin' ter be a rebuttal betwixt you an' I, and dat rebuttal am a-goin' ter be mixed wid a lot ob back-bitin' too, but it all goin' ter take place behind closed doors. (*Affirmative takes seat. Calhoun resumes his speech.*) Ef dat nigger comprehended what disastrously dangerous terrain he was permeating, he'd leab dis hall right now. And—

AFFIRMATIVE—(*interrupts, and Whitman stops with one hand stretched out in air just as he says the word, "and."*) Mr. President, is you got a dictionary 'round 'bouts here, 'cause I's done lost track ob dat man.

WHITMAN—(*turns slowly. Faces opponent. Sticks both hands in hip pockets.*) Yuh illiterate species ob arrogance, has yuh got de gumption ter perambulate ma right ter talk how I so desires? (*Bends knees and gazes into other's eyes.*)

AFF.—(*aside to audience*) I wish Webster was in town. I'd surely hab invited him ter spend de ebening wid me.

WHITMAN—Ain't yuh got no respect fer a grandiloquent anthromorphous being like me? Well, tuk yuh seat and let yuh elongated carcass be sedentary tell I disprobe ma intensely inappropriate and meritorious subsidences on dis yuh question ob no small outcome. (*Waits.*) Ain't yuh acquainted wid de fact dat it is de most hypocritical and impertinent attitude dat yuh could conglomerate when yuh interrupts a gentilman in his speeching. (*Turns to audience.*) Now, ter git back ter way I fell off de train. I sed I got to probe ma situation. But how kin I probe ma situation when he done quotated me fer authority? (*Waits.*) I might hab won distinction by dat protracted and simple oration, but I sees now, dat I's goin' ter win *ex*tinction, and *in*stinction, an' all other kinds ob "stinctions." Has yuh eber seed a man git inter so much trouble? Now, I's gotta disproob what I done proob, (*very slow*) or else proob dat I had disproobed de proof what I was using to proob de already proobed proof which ma somewhat chagrined opponent now says he kin proob de proof dat I already proobed in ma oration. Whew! (*Wipes face with his sleeve.*) Dat's some preposition. Hit's a heap lot worse dan de real query. De sole retreat dat I kin lean on fer consolation is to adjudicate or renovate all de fallacious remarks dat has been proferred dis ebening, or in oder words, I's gotta proob John C. Calhoun a liar, or lose de job as President ob de Almagated Ordah of Expiring Ethiopians. (*Waits.*) En I can't do dat, 'cause de constitution ob dat body says dat a liar can't be de president. (*Waits. Smiles and talks low.*) Does yuh folks out dar like oratory? Oh yea! I knows yuh does, 'spe-

cially de oratorical truth. So dat's why I gib yuh dat oration jest now, but don't yuh like to hear de real truthful truth? Assuredly, yuh does, and huh is where I's goin' ter tell yuh de truth and gib yuh an example ob oratory at de same time. (*Rolls up sleeves and cuffs to pants.*) Who (*Gesture—plenty of it.*) am dat aristocratical and enervated nigger dat sed de right time fer us niggers to wake up am come? When dose meaningless words comes floating through aerial space and become tangent to our ears, dey sounds jest like de indelible ecstacy ob an intoxicated man. (*Waits.*) Dose words has no meaning to demselbes at all. Dey is as void ob sense as de brains ob dere defender. (*Points to affirmative speaker.*) And (*jumps up and down on the platform*) I tells yuh— (*at this moment three judges walk up front toward president's desk. They go behind and around Whitman. He stops talking, on the word, "yuh," as they begin to walk up front. His eyes follow them the whole way.*)

FIRST JUDGE—Mr. President, we considers dat de affiirmative has won de query.

AFF.—(*Bursts out into a hearty laughter. Everybody smiles except Whitman, who slowly runs his hand into his inside coat pocket and pulls out a glass beer bottle which he raises over his head and advances on the judges.*)

JUDGES—(*Trembling at sight. Sec. and Monitor steal up behind Whitman.*) We mean de affirmative lost! (*Whitman stops. Lowers bottle. Sec. and Monitor stop behind him. Affirmative loses smile slowly and gets up out of his chair. Runs hand into pocket and pulls out a pair of brass knucks, which he puts on left hand. Expectorates on his left fist and swings arm in air.*)

AFF.—(*as he whirls hand in air.*) Who yuh sed lost dis debate? (*Critic and Treas. steal up behind him. Calhoun bursts out into hearty laughter, patting knees with his hands.*)

WHITMAN—I tell yuh, yuh done lost dis debate.

AFF.—(*Faces Whitman and gazes at him.*) Laugh yuh last laugh, en, ef yuh has eny insurance, yuh had betta make dese gentilmen acquainted wid de receipts. (*Whitman raises bottle; affirmative swings left arm. Sec. and Mon. catch Whitman from behind; Critic and Treas. catch Aff. from behind.*)

PRES.—(*addressing Jasamine Johns Joharis*) Jasamine Johns Joharis, go call de cops, quick.

J. J. J.—(*Disappears through door. Whitman and Aff. struggle to free themselves.*)

J. J. J.—(*outside*) Cop! Police! Help!

POLICEMAN—(*outside*) What de debil am wrong wid yuh, Jasamine Johns Joharis?

J. J. J.—Quick! Come here!

(*Enter two black-face cops and J. J. J.*)

PRES.—Right dis way, gentilmen. (*Each policeman draws a very long club from his belt; two offenders calm down when they see the officers of the law. Policemen arrest them.*) Yuh kin tuk dem both, cause dey has broken de constitution ob de Almagated Ordah ob Expiring Ethiopians which sed dat a jailbird can't hold de salted position ob President. So I reckin we'll hab ter had anuder debate fer ter 'cide de question. (*Police leave with prisoners; all others resume seats as before.*) Now, dat we's got peace, we'll hab an acclamation by Mr. Jasamine Johns Joharis.

J. J. J.—(*Gets up on platform. Bows.*) De title ob my exclamation is "De Watermillion."

(*This should be recited with a great amount of gesture. and inflection of voice, both in the proper places.*)

Dey was a watermillion,
Growin' on a vine,
And dey was a pickaninny,
A-watchin' it all de time.

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An' when dat watermillion
Were a-ripenin' in de sun,
An' de stripes along its jacket
Was comin' one by one,

Dat pickaninny hooked it,
And, totin' it away,
He et dat entire million,
Within one single day.

He et de rind and pieces,
He finished it wid vim—
An' den dat watermillion
Jes' up an' finished him.

PRES.—Dat am some nigger. Dat nigger is goin' ter be president ob Africi yet. (*Strikes on desk for order.*) Does I hear a movement fer disjoinment?

J. J. J.—Mr. President, I moves dat we disjoin.

PRES.—(*Throws off mortar board and gown.*) Dat mobe don't need eny second. Everybody out fer de bowlin' alley! (*Uproar.*)

CURTAIN

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By Soemple. Here is an attractive and novel number for the Primary Grades or Kindergarten. Little Tim's despair in not being able to master letters is turned to keen interest by the antics of the alphabet troupe. Plays about 20 minutes. Price, 25c.

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By Banche Thompson. Ths is a charming new play for 6 boys, 5 girls, fairies, peasants, attendants, etc. The Princess is downhearted and refuses to be consoled. The fiddler plays, peasants do folk-dances, fairies drill, but not untll she gets the silver sandals is she contented. Plays 1 hour or more. Price, 25c.

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By Margaret Howard. A pretty story showing how dissatisfied Betty was cured by her mother, who tells the story of the hardships of the Pilgrims, which is illustrated by ten tableaux. Large numbers of children can be used. Plays about 30 minutes. Price, 25c.

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